

Johnson Lane Park Expansion
Environmental Assessment
Recreation & Public Purposes Lease
EA-NV-030-06-023
N-75586

I. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE AND NEED

A. Background & Introduction

In April of 1978, an application (N-19685) to lease 35 acres of public land located within the SW¼ of Section 27, T. 14 N., R. 20 E., under the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act of 1926, was submitted by the Douglas County School District (District). The District requested the land so as to construct an elementary school to serve the residents in the Johnson Lane area. In February of 1980, the land was classified as suitable for lease or sale under the R&PP Act. A lease was subsequently issued in March of 1980 for the proposed school site.

In August of 1982, the District submitted an application to amend lease N-19685 by acquisition of an additional 40.00 acres in the NE¼SW¼ of Section 27. The District requested the additional land for the purpose of constructing a middle school and high school complex in association with the elementary school. The additional land was classified as suitable for lease or sale in June of 1985 and the lease amended on August of 1985. The lease was renewed for an additional five year period on March 5, 1990. However, due to potential flooding issues, the District elected to not build the schools and instead purchased 29 acres of private land on the south side of Stephanie Way directly across from the park. Pinion Hills Elementary School was constructed on this site at a later date. On March 16, 1992, 20 acres of land was relinquished from the lease area by the District so as to allow filing of an R&PP application (N-55462) by the Douglas County Parks Dept. (Parks Dept.) in order to construct Johnson Lane Park. The parcel was developed for park purposes and subsequently conveyed to Douglas County via patent 27-93-0021 in April of 1993. Lease N-19685 subsequently expired on March 11, 1995 and the casefile was closed.

On February 27, 2002, an R&PP application was filed by the Parks Dept. for the remaining 55 acres of public land previously classified under N-19685 for the purpose of pursuing the expansion of the Johnson Lane Park. The current application for the 55 acres of public land will be the subject of this report.

B. Purpose and Need

A Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) lease would be issued to the Parks Dept. in order to expand the existing facilities at Johnson Lane Park. Current development encumbers about 5 acres of the 20 acres currently under lease. Development includes a ball field, restrooms, picnic and barbecue facilities, basketball courts, children's playground, and parking lot. The additional 55 acres under application would include improvements as addressed below in the Proposed Action. The need for the proposed facilities is to provide enhanced recreational opportunities to the residents of the Johnson Lane and Stephanie Way neighborhoods.

C. Land Use Plan Conformance Statement

All applications for R&PP leases are subject to standard approval procedures as outlined in Federal Regulations contained in 43 CFR 2912. This includes a determination as to whether the proposed use is consistent with the purposes for which the public land is being managed. The proposed action and alternative described below are in conformance with the Consolidated Resource Management Plan. Page LND-7 of the document states “non-bureau initiated realty proposals would be considered where analysis indicates they are beneficial to the public”. The Consolidated Resource Management Plan has also identified the subject lands as suitable for disposal.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action

The Parks Dept. has applied to lease the following described public lands (see maps):

T.14 N., R. 20 E. MDM

Section 27, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$,
E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$.

Comprising 55.00 acres, more or less

The action would authorize issuance of an R&PP lease to the Parks Dept. for expansion of the existing park. New facilities would include softball fields, multi-purpose playing fields, tennis courts, community recreation and picnic areas, equestrian trail and facility, storm water infiltration zone, skate park, parking areas, restrooms, and related ancillary structures for maintenance, storage, etc. Approximately 20 acres at the north end of the parcel would retain the existing desert landscape. Landscaping to be installed would be irrigated by the existing municipal water service. Night lighting would not be installed on the playing fields. Primary access would be on the west side of the park from Stephanie Way. Secondary access would be from Fuller Avenue on the east side (see attached map).

B. Alternative

The only alternative to be considered further in this analysis is the no-action alternative. Selection of this alternative would preclude issuance of a lease authorizing the park expansion. The site would continue to remain unimproved vacant public land.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Scoping and Issue Identification

Public scoping was conducted at meetings held on June 2, and June 8, 2004, at the Johnson Lane Fire Station. The meetings were conducted by the Douglas County Parks and Recreation Commission to present the master plan for the park to the public. A notice of the meeting was mailed to all residences within a one mile radius of the park. Approximately 40-50 individuals attended each meeting. Ken Nelson, BLM realty specialist, gave short presentations on the R&PP process and passed out comment

sheets and mailing address sheets for interested parties. Verbal comments at the meetings were generally positive in nature. Comments regarding proposed access routes into the park were received by the Commissioners who then directed the Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department to revisit the plan and make any feasible changes. A map depicting the proposed revisions was received on December 7, 2004. One written comment was received at the Carson City Field Office on June 17, 2004. The comment was from a property owner who moved to the area in 2003. His residence is located adjacent to the public land under application and his direct access to public land would be lost if the park were developed. In regard to the comment, access to public land is available at other locations in the vicinity. Also, the land has been identified for disposal by the Carson City Consolidated Resource Management Plan (2001).

B. Proposed Action:

General Setting & Land Use

The subject land is located at an elevation of approximately 4780 ft. on the south slope of Hot Springs Mountain. Public lands in the area are utilized primarily for open space. Private lands in the general vicinity are mainly utilized for residential purposes.

Critical Elements of the Human Environment

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives in this EA:

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Environmental Justice

Farm Lands (prime or unique)

Flood plains

Hazardous Materials

Migratory Birds

Native American Religious Concerns

Threatened or Endangered Plant & Animal Species

Water Quality

Wetlands/Riparian

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wilderness

The following resources, although present in the project area, are not affected by the proposed action: air quality.

C. Resources Present

Vegetation

Vegetation in the area is composed mainly of sagebrush, rabbitbrush, Mormon tea, desert peach, and annual and perennial grasses and forbs.

Invasive Non-native Species

Invasive species including hoary cress, tall white top (perennial pepperweed), Russian knapweed and diffuse knapweed are known to be present in the general vicinity.

Soils

Soils in the area are included within the Haybourne sand unit (Sheet 2, Symbol 391 - Soil Survey of Douglas County Area, Nevada, Soil Conservation Service, USDA, May 1984). This consists of deep, well drained sand to sandy loams. Runoff is slow and the hazard of water erosion is slight. The soil is subject to the hazard of moderate blowing. Finally, the soil type is suitable for irrigated crops if irrigation water is available.

Wildlife

Wildlife in the area is mainly composed of small mammals, reptiles, songbirds, and occasional raptors. No threatened or endangered animal species occupy the area.

Cultural Resources

The project area is within the region occupied exclusively by the Washoe. Generally the Washoe occupied a relatively small area, approximately 40 miles wide by 120 miles long. However, they ranged in excess of 10,000 square miles during seasonal foraging expeditions. Because of the seasonal foraging, a variety of cultural resources types may be anticipated in the project area. However, many hunting and plant gathering activities would not have deposited evidence of these activities. The most likely material remains expected are of flaked or ground stone.

Historically, Euro-American exploration and emigration into and throughout the region did not occur until the 1840s. Local initial settlement dates to 1850 with Mormon Station (present day Genoa) the first regional trading post. Other settlements in the area relate to gold and silver discoveries in the Comstock. To connect the settlements, transportation corridors including constructed roads and railways were developed. Generally, the project area remained in federal administration until recent times with no mineral exploration or homesteading occurring. Because of these historical variables, minimal historical resources should be present.

Visual Resources

The subject land is within a Class III visual resource management (VRM) class. Under this VRM

class, changes in the landscape due to management activities may be evident but should be subordinate to the existing landscape. Landscape features in the area include views of Hot Springs Mountain directly north of the parcel and the Carson Range and Pine Nut Mountains on the west and east respectively. Landscape colors in the vicinity are predominately shades of gray and brown (soils) and yellow and green to gray-green (vegetation). The natural landscape in the area has been altered by the development of residential subdivisions to the west, east, and south of the subject parcel. Douglas County facilities including Johnson Lane Park and Johnson Lane Fire Station lie directly west of the parcel. Pinion Hills Elementary School is located directly east across Stephanie Way from the parcel.

Lands and Realty

Surface Estate - Public

Mineral Estate – Public

Rights-of-Way of Record Affecting the Subject Land:

N-56841 - Access Road (Fuller Avenue) - Douglas County - 60 ft. in width by 1310 ft. in length.

Recreation

Currently, casual recreation in the vicinity includes such activities as horseback riding, hiking and ORV use. The previously developed portion of Johnson Lane Park provides the opportunity for softball, basketball, children's playground, and picnic facilities.

A portion of the land under application was closed to off-road (ORV) vehicle use by a Notice of Closure published in the Federal Register on November 1, 1996 (Vol. 61, No. 213, pg. 56566). The reason for the closure was to prevent further damage to vegetation and soils and to eliminate noise and dust from occurring in close proximity to the existing park, and adjacent school and residential area. Issuance of the lease to Douglas County would effectively rescind the order.

Minerals

The project area is located within quaternary alluvium that is notable for a fine loamy sand surface of indeterminate depth. The sand surface is likely eolian in nature, the result of wind erosion across the Carson River floodplain to the west (see mineral potential report for further information).

No active unpatented mining claim, mineral lease or permits, or mineral material permits or rights-of-way encumber the subject land.

D. Alternatives: The description of the affected environment for the No Action alternative would be the same as that for the proposed action.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Proposed Action

Vegetation

Vegetation would be removed or extensively disturbed by construction activities associated with development of the park. Approximately 35 acres of vegetation would be removed or disturbed by the proposed developments. Ornamental trees, shrubs, and lawn sod would be utilized for irrigated landscaping as required by the landscaping plan. Approximately 20 acres of native vegetation would remain intact in the north area of the parcel.

Invasive Non-native Species

Surface disturbance associated with the project could allow for infestation by noxious weeds that have been observed in the general vicinity. The proposed landscaping plan for the park would tend to mitigate any potential infestation of non-native species.

Soils

Approximately 35 acres of soil would be extensively disturbed by construction activities. Accelerated erosion could occur in the disturbed soils prior to stabilization by landscape revegetation or construction of proposed improvements.

Wildlife

Approximately 35 acres of wildlife habitat would be destroyed or extensively disturbed by construction of recreational facilities within the lease area. Some birds, small mammals, and reptiles would return to these areas after construction is completed and landscaping established.

Cultural Resources

A cultural resource inventory (CRR-03-2208) has been completed for the project area. During the survey archaeologists observed and documented the remnants of one historic road segment and an associated sparse historic debris scatter. The BLM has determined that this site is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, relative to cultural resources, there exists no need to alter the proposed action in order to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

Native American Consultation

The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California was consulted during preparation of this Environmental Assessment. An initial letter was forwarded to their offices on May 26, 2005. The Washoe tribal cultural resources coordinator, William Dancing Feather, visited the project location with BLM archaeologist Gary Bowyer on June 30, 2005. These actions completed the consultation process.

Visual Resources

Development of the proposed park expansion would not distract from the existing surroundings that have been previously impacted by residential housing and Douglas County facilities including the

existing park, Johnson Lane Fire Station, and Pinion Hills Elementary School. The project thus meets VRM Class III objectives.

Recreation

Development of the proposed park would provide additional recreational opportunities for soccer, tennis, softball, skate park, equestrian activities, and picnic facilities. Casual recreational uses such as horseback riding and ORV use would be displaced. Public lands to the north of the park development would still be available for these activities.

Minerals

In summary, the potential for the occurrence of energy and mineral resources on the subject land is low. Potential for the development of any mineral resource is low (see mineral potential report for further information).

B. Alternatives

Under selection of the No Action alternative, none of the above described impacts would occur. The high school site would remain unauthorized and no athletic field would be constructed.

C. Cumulative Impacts

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of the proposed action or alternatives.

E. Monitoring

Monitoring of the lease area would occur on a periodic basis by Carson City Field Office personnel.

V. CONSULTATION & COORDINATION

A. List of Preparers/Reviewers:

Ken Nelson - Project Lead, Lands & Realty
James Carter - Cultural Resources
Jim deLaureal - Soils, Invasive Nonnative Species
Arthur Callan - Recreation
Carla James - Minerals
Terry Knight - Visual Resource Management
Jim Schroeder - Water Resources
Dean Tonenna - Vegetation, T&E Plants
Desna Young - Environmental Coordination

B. Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted:

Craig Burnside – Douglas County Parks and Recreation

C. Native American Consultation

A. Brain Wallace, Chair
Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
919 Highway 395 South
Gardnerville, NV 89410